

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SP-02 INR-10 AF-10 ARA-10 NEA-11

NSC-05 SS-15 /078 W

-----041951 081448Z /45S

R 080902Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY SANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4651

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANA 2154

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORG

SUBJ: MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS: CUBAN ROLE IN HORN

REF: STATE 107365

1. IN CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTRY POLITICAL OFFICE HEAD, IBRAHIM AL-KIBSI, ON MAY 7TH, CHARGE ASKED WHETHER YAR WAS SUFFICIENTLY CONCERNED ABOUT CUBAN ACTIVITIES IN ETHIOPIA AND POTENTIALLY IN PDRY TO RAISE THE ISSUE IN NON-ALIGNED CIRCLES. KIBSI NOTED THAT YAR WAS NOT MEMBER OF NAM COORDINATING COMMITTEE WHICH HE SAID WOULD PROBABLY MEET SOON IN NEW YORK AT SPECIAL DISARMAMENT SESSION, BUT YEMENI VIEWS COULD BE, HE SAID, RAISED BY ARAB MEMBERS OF THE GROUP.

2. KIBSI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT YEMENI PRONOUNCEMENTS ON THE SUBJECT HAVE BEEN SO FAR VERY VAGUE AND IN GENERAL CALLED SIMPLY FOR AN END TO FOREIGN INTERVENTION IN COUNTRIES OF THE HORN. INCONSISTENTLY, HE USED THIS OBSERVATION AS A PEG TO BERATE THE CHARGE AS MANY OTHER YEMENI OFFICIALS HAVE DONE IN THE PAST TWO MONTHS FOR NOT HELPING SOMALIA. KIBSI SAID THAT HE DID NOT THINK YEMEN WOULD TAKE ANY PUBLIC STAND OF OPPOSITION TO CUBANS WHEN U.S. SEEMED UNWILLING TO BRING MORE PRESSURE
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TO BEAR ON ITS OWN. "WE'RE WORRIED ABOUT THE CUBANS IN SOUTH YEMEN. WE HAVE INFORMATION THAT A LARGE NUMBER HAVE RECENTLY COME TO SOUTH YEMEN FROM ETHIOPIA EVEN THOUGH THE BUILDUP OF CUBANS IN ETHIOPIA IS CONTINUING."

3. WORTH NOTING IN THIS REGARD THAT SAUDI MILITARY

ATTACHE, SALIH HUDAYAN, TOLD CHARGE ON SATURDAY, 6 MAY, THAT CUBAN BATTALION OF THREE TO FIVE HUNDRED MEN WERE STATIONED AT AL-ABR WITH DETACHMENTS AT MINWAKH AND ZAMAKH -- ALL PDRY POSITIONS FACING SAUDI TROOPS IN SHARURA. HUDAYAN ALSO HAD STORY OF CUBAN INCREASE IN SOUTH YEMEN BUT HE USED FIGURE OF "LITTLE MORE THAN ONE THOUSAND" FOR CUBAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN PDRY. PRESIDENT GHASHMI USED SAME FIGURE IN DEPARTURE INTERVIEW HE HAD WITH DATT ON 2 MAY.

4. IN DISCUSSION WITH KIBSI, CHARGE DID NOT PRESS DISCUSSION OF HOW MANY CUBANS MIGHT BE IN SOUTH YEMEN BUT SAID, BRIEFLY, THAT U.S. CONCERNED TO STRENGTHEN SOMALIA ONCE APPROPRIATE ASSURANCES WERE IN HAND CONCERNING ITS BORDERS. WE THOUGHT THAT MOMENT WAS NOW AT HYKD AND THEREFORE IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO ADD MILITARY SALES TO THE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE THAT WE WERE ALREADY PROVIDING SOMALIA. WE WERE AT THE SAME TIME TRYING TO MAINTAIN A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ETHIOPIANS AND TO BRING WHATEVER PRESSURE WE COULD ON THEM, AND ON THE CUBANS, TO AVERT AN ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE A MILITARY SETTLEMENT ON ERITREA. WE SAW THE NAM AS ONE FORUM IN WHICH THIS MIGHT BE POSSIBLE, BUT ONLY IF REGIONAL STATES TOOK THE LEAD.
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5. KIBSI WAS CLEARLY INTERESTED AND NOTED ON HIS OWN THAT JUSTIFICATION FOR FOREIGN INTERVENTION IN ETHIOPIA HAD VANISHED NOW THAT ETHIOPIANS COULD CLAIM THAT THEIR TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY HAD BEEN RESTORED. HE PROMISED TO RAISE THE ISSUE WITH ASNAJ AND TO PRESENT THE SUBJECT IN THE BRIEFS THAT HE HAS BEGUN TO WRITE FOR PRESIDENT GHASHMI.

COMMENT: WE WILL FOLLOW-UP ON THIS SUBJECT WHEN NEW GOVERNMENT IS ANNOUNCED AND IT IS CERTAIN WHO THE FOREIGN MINISTER WILL BE, BUT IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT YEMEN WILL TAKE ANY KIND OF A FORWARD POSITION IN THIS MATTER. YEMEN IS WEAK AND DOUBTS ITS SAUDI AND US BACKING. THEY ARE CONCERNED FOR THE MOMENT TO MAINTAIN THE APPEARANCE OF GOOD RELATIONS WITH SOUTH YEMEN AND FEEL THAT, IN THEIR RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA, THE LARGE YEMENI COMMUNITY -- STILL FIVE OR SIX THOUSAND IN ADDIS ABABA FOR INSTANCE -- IS HOSTAGE TO ETHIOPIAN DISPLEASURE.
RANSOM

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTERVENTION, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SANA02154
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780194-1050
Format: TEL
From: SANA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780582/aaaacshv.tel
Line Count: 117
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 2fdab4a2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION IO
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 107365
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2761352
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS: CUBAN ROLE IN HORN
TAGS: PORG, PGOV, DJ, SO, ET, CU, YE, (AL-KIBSI, IBRAHIM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/2fdab4a2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014